

MULTI AGENCY CHILD PROTECTION CHRONOLOGIES BLACKPOOL LSCB GUIDANCE –FEBRUARY 2007



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A Part 8 serious case review was completed in Blackpool in June 05, looking at the circumstances preceding the disappearance of Child A. A review of child protection practice prior to the young person's disappearance took place identifying it is essential:

'To ensure that staff attending Child Protection Conferences are the ones with the direct knowledge of the family, that they understand their individual as well as their collective responsibilities and have access to a multi-agency chronology of all the significant events in relation to the family'.

- 1.2 12 recommendations were made in total. The specific recommendation (number 3) relating to chronologies states:

'Individual agencies should supply chronologies in an agreed LSCB format to be made into a multi-agency chronology of key events for use at review conferences. The chronology should be updated at each core group meeting'.

- 1.3 This recommendation draws on the findings of The Climbe Enquiry, in highlighting the need for properly maintained chronologies on the file of every open childcare case to Targeted Services (formally Children and Young People's Department – Social Care).
- 1.4 What follows is the guidance, detailing how this recommendation is to be implemented.

2. GUIDELINES

- 2.1 It is widely recognised that children and young people are most effectively safeguarded if professionals work together and share information. Single factors in themselves are often perceived to be relatively harmless; however, if they multiply and compound one another the consequences can be serious, on occasions, devastating.

2.2 A Multi-agency Child Protection Chronology (MACPC):

- Provides a mechanism through which information can be systematically shared and merged.
- Enables agencies to identify the history of a family.
- Provides invaluable information about a child's life experience.
- Can reveal risks, concerns, patterns and themes, strengths and weaknesses within a family.
- Identify previous periods of professional involvement/support and the effectiveness/failure of previous intervention.
- Informs the overall assessment regarding the caregivers' ability and motivation to change.

- 2.3 Chronologies are not only a means of organising and merging information; they enable practitioners to gain a more accurate picture of the whole case and highlight gaps and missing details that require further assessment and identification.
- 2.4 The chronology provides a skeleton of key incidents and events that inform the assessment of children and young people who are considered at risk of significant harm and are the subject of Child Protection Plans. If they are to be of value they should be:
- **Succinct** - If every issue/contact is recorded, the chronology loses its value.
 - **Simple in format** – thus ensuring that information can be efficiently merged and sorted.
 - **In the agreed typed format** -all contributions should be submitted in the Microsoft Word template, on disc or email is preferred.
- 2.5 The purpose of the MACPC is to inform assessment. It is therefore essential that the chronology is owned by the Core Group and used as a tool in assessing progress and the level of concern regarding significant harm.
- 2.6 The chronology is only one means of collating information and will need supplementing by reports that draw out messages from the chronology. Getting the facts agreed and seeing the overall pattern is crucial and can often be informative and revealing.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 It is the responsibility of each agency to ensure that there is a mechanism to collate all significant events in the child's life over time
- a. It is expected that any professional or agency that contributes to the protection of children will provide up-to-date information for the Multi-Agency Child Protection Chronology (MACPC).
 - b. The MACPC will be triggered at the *strategy discussion/meeting – when a decision is made whether or not to initiate a Child Protection Investigation (section 47).
 - c. It will serve to inform decision-making at any given point in the child protection process.
 - d. At the Initial Child Protection Conference, when a child or young person is made the subject of a child protection plan, the continued requirement of a MACPC will form part of the child protection plan – the chair of the conference will be responsible for reinforcing the requirement in the planning stage of the meeting.
 - e. Thereafter, the chronology will be updated each month, prior to or at the core group meeting, and presented as a separate document to the Child Protection Review meeting.
 - f. As the lead agency, the responsibility for collating the information gathered is that of Children and Young People – Targeted Services. In

these cases, it will be the key worker who is identified at the Initial child Protection Conference.

- g. However, it is essential that all professionals and agencies understand that they have a joint responsibility in safeguarding vulnerable children and young people and should be active participants in the child protection process. All professionals are to ensure that information describing key incidents/events/information is passed on to the key worker, each month, in the agreed typed format. This can be done by email, floppy disc or on paper. It is the responsibility of the key worker, to ensure that the chronology is provided for the Child Protection Review Meeting.
- h. The Social Work Team Manager is responsible for ensuring that all chronologies are maintained and kept up-to-date for each child subject to a child protection plan.
- i. Managers of all workers involved in the supervision and support of children who are the subject of child protection plans, are responsible for ensuring that workers actively contribute to the MACPC in the agreed format.

3.2 **It is accepted that, in some circumstances, it may only be possible to share chronological information at the strategy discussion/meeting verbally. In addition, some families have long and complicated histories – the compiling of a chronology will be a more onerous task and cannot be completed within a short period of time. It is essential that as much work as is practicable is completed in the early stages and continued commitment and time be given to the completion of a full chronology through the course of the child protection period. Basic chronological information must be shared with the social worker in time for a merged document to be shared at the Initial Child Protection Conference.*

4. FORMAT

4.1 The formatting of shared information will be done so in a simple, agreed format.

Date	Name	Source	Episode/Event	Comment
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- a. **Date** – the date the episode event is said to have taken place (not the date of recording).
- b. **Name** – of the individual involved in the episode e.g. the child or caregiver.
- c. **Source** – the agency or individual sharing the information.
- d. **Episode/Event** – the significant piece of information e.g. police log of reported incidence of domestic violence: report from school that child arrives from home hungry, unkempt and tired: missed medical appointments: allegation of NAI: anonymous referral regarding child left unsupervised: Section 47 enquiry etc.
- e. **Comment** – Basic info to add to the above. That is, the comment should inform the reader of any action taken in response to the event or episode.

4.2 The template can be accessed from the Blackpool Council website.

- Go to the Blackpool Council website
- Go to 'S' on the A-Z searching tool (S for 'Safeguarding')
- Click on Safeguarding Children Board
- Click on Leaflets and Publications
- Click on Multi Agency Child Protection Chronologies

4.3 All agencies should also have the template and guidance document stored in an appropriate place for workers within their own workplace for easy access.

5. SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION/EVENTS

- 5.1 A significant event is an incident that impacts on the child's safety and welfare, circumstances or home environment. This will inevitably involve a professional decision and/or judgement based upon the child and family's individual circumstances.
- 5.2 A chronology provides a sequential story of significant events in a family's history whilst interweaving information about emotional and/or relationship difficulties. It contributes to an emerging picture, based on fact and interactions of a case – current information is understood in the context of previous information, informing professional assessment.
- 5.2 There are a number of core incidents, which should be recorded. Dependant upon the nature of the harm, these may differ from case to case.

Examples of Core Incidents

- Contacts or referrals about the child and/or family.
- Assessments e.g. family support
- Strategy discussions/meetings
- Section 47 investigations
- House moves
- School exclusions
- School attendance/major incidents e.g. bullying racism
- Attendance/admittance to hospital
- Criminal proceedings
- Change in school
- Change in GP (e.g. this could be particularly significant in cases of Fabricated and Induced Illness).
- Referrals to other agencies/teams
- Enquires to the Child Protection Register
- Child absconded/missing
- Child becomes looked after/child is discharged from LA care
- Death in the family
- Parent/Carer has new partner
- Another person moves into the family home
- Birth of a new baby
- Person moves out of the family home
- Attempted suicide or overdose
- Police logs detailing pertinent info re family members/family home e.g. reported incident of domestic violence; drunken behaviour of carers etc.

5.3 There are also a number of other incidents, which may be significant to the child and family, depending on their circumstances. Examples include:

- A significant observation during home visits e.g. the frequent presence of unknown adults, evidence of damage to the property.

5.4 If chronologies are to accurately reflect family circumstances, **positive factors** should also be recorded. Examples include:

- Evidence of the family's engagement with professionals
- Parents self-referral for help/guidance support with relevant agencies
- The child's presentation in school significantly improves

5.5 The above provide a small number of examples and it is essential that practitioners use their professional judgement in identifying pertinent information. Blackpool's Child Protection Procedures provide detailed information and guidance (Chapter 2) about risk factors. Workers are encouraged to use this information and to consult with their managers and/or fellow members of the Core Group if clarity is needed regarding significant events/episodes/information.

6. INTRODUCTION OF THE MACPC

6.1 The timetable for the introduction of MACPC for all agencies is as follows:

- Blackpool's LSCB will consider the final suggested arrangements for MACPCs on 27.03.06.
- MACPCs will be introduced as a mandatory component of child protection work on **Monday 2nd April 2007**.
- Prior to this, four half day training sessions will be offered to key representatives of all agencies; on 26.02.07 and 26.03.07

6.4 Thereafter, training will be incorporated into the existing Working Together programme.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In preparing the guidance and this accompanying document, the following were used as reference material and offered insight regarding chronologies:

1. '*Lost Innocents*' Reder and Duncan Peter Reder & Sylvia Duncan. London: Routledge. 1999. 178 pp. £ 14.99 (pb). ISBN 0 415 202701.
2. Child Neglect Practice Issues for Health and Social Care Edited by Julie Taylor and Brigid Daniel Forwarded by Olive Stevenson (pb)
3. Procedure for Recording Chronologies – Children and Families Division – Sefton Social Services.
4. Constructing a Chronology in cases of Suspected Fabricated or Induced Illness – Cumbria County Council.